

**PROPAGATING THE RESURRECTED,
ASCENDED, AND ALL-INCLUSIVE CHRIST
AS THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

(Saturday—Second Morning Session)

Message Eight

The Development of the Kingdom of God

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:3, 8-9; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31

- I. The Gospel of Luke is a narrative of the ministry of the incarnated Jesus as a record of the incarnated Jesus on earth; Acts is a record of the succeeding ministry of the resurrected and ascended Christ in heaven carried out through His believers on earth—1:8-9:**
- A. In the Gospels the Lord's ministry on earth, carried out by Himself, was sowing Himself as the seed of the kingdom into His believers, with no church built up yet—Luke 8:4-15.
 - B. In Acts the Lord's ministry in heaven, carried out through His believers in His resurrection and ascension, spreads Him as the development of the kingdom of God for the building up of the church throughout the entire world to constitute His Body, His fullness, to express Him, even the fullness of God for God's expression—1:8; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31; Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:23; 3:19.
- II. The kingdom of God is the main subject of the apostles' preaching in Acts (8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31); this is indicated by the fact that the resurrected Christ, in His appearing to the apostles through a period of forty days, spoke to them concerning the kingdom of God (1:3):**
- A. In the Gospels the Lord Jesus Himself had announced the gospel of the kingdom—Luke 4:43:
 - 1. The kingdom of God is the Savior as the seed of life sown into His believers, God's chosen people, and developing into a realm over which God can rule as His kingdom in His divine life—17:21; Mark 4:3, 26.
 - 2. The entrance into the kingdom of God is regeneration, and the development of the kingdom is the believers' growth in the divine life—John 3:5; 2 Pet. 1:3-11.
 - 3. The kingdom of God is the church life today, in which the faithful believers live, and it will develop into the coming kingdom as a reward to be inherited by the overcoming saints in the millennium—Rom. 14:17; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5; Rev. 20:4, 6.
 - 4. Eventually, the kingdom of God will consummate in the New Jerusalem as the eternal kingdom of God, an eternal realm of the eternal blessing of God's eternal life, which all of God's redeemed will enjoy in the new heaven and new earth for eternity—21:1-4; 22:1-5, 14.
 - 5. The kingdom of God is what the Savior announced as the gospel, the good news, to those who were alienated from the life of God—Eph. 4:18.
 - 6. The Lord's word in Luke 17:20-21 indicates that the kingdom of God is not

material but spiritual; it is the Savior in His first coming (vv. 21-22), in His second coming (vv. 23-30), in the rapture of His overcoming believers (vv. 31-36), and in His destroying of the Antichrist (v. 37) to recover the whole earth for His reign there (Rev. 11:15).

7. The kingdom of God is the Savior Himself, who was in the midst of the Pharisees but who is now within the believers—Luke 17:21; 2 Cor. 13:5; Col. 1:27:
 - a. Wherever the Savior is, there the kingdom of God is; the kingdom of God is with Him, and He brings it to His disciples—Luke 4:43; 17:21.
 - b. Christ is the seed of the kingdom of God to be sown into God's chosen people to develop into God's ruling realm—8:5, 10.
 - c. Since His resurrection He has been within His believers; hence, the kingdom of God is within the church—John 14:20; Rom. 8:10; 14:17.
- B. In Acts 1:3 the Lord Jesus as the One in resurrection must have helped the disciples to have such a proper realization concerning the kingdom of God:
 1. The disciples must have begun to see that the kingdom of God is the spreading of Christ as life in the believers, that it is the propagation of Christ as life in His believers to form a realm in which God rules in His life—John 3:3, 5.
 2. The disciples certainly must have understood that they were now part of the propagation, the spreading, of Christ, and thereby were part of the kingdom of God—Acts 1:8-9; 8:12; 20:25; 28:23, 31.

III. The kingdom of God is the spreading of Christ as life into His believers to form a realm in which God rules in His life—2 Pet. 1:3-11:

- A. To enter into this kingdom, people need to repent of their sins and believe in the gospel so that their sins may be forgiven and so that they may be regenerated by God to have the divine life, which matches the divine nature of this kingdom—Mark 1:15; John 3:3, 5.
- B. All the believers in Christ can share the kingdom in the church age for their enjoyment of God in His righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit—Rom. 14:17.
- C. The kingdom of God will become the kingdom of Christ and of God for the overcoming believers to inherit and enjoy in the coming kingdom age so that they may reign with Christ for a thousand years—1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5; Rev. 20:4, 6.
- D. As the eternal kingdom, the kingdom of God will be an eternal blessing of God's eternal life for all of God's redeemed to enjoy in the new heaven and new earth for eternity—21:1-4; 22:1-5, 14, 17.

IV. The churches and the kingdom of God go together; the churches produced by the propagation of the resurrected Christ are the kingdom of God on earth today—Acts 14:22; 20:25:

- A. The resurrected Christ, who is propagating Himself in His ascension, by the Spirit, and through the disciples, is the reality of the kingdom of God; the kingdom of God is His expansion—1:8; 8:12:

1. The churches are the expansion of Christ, who came to sow Himself as the seed of the kingdom of God; this is revealed in the Gospels—Mark 4:3, 26.
 2. In the Gospels Christ was the seed of the kingdom; in the book of Acts we have the propagation of this seed to produce the churches as the kingdom of God—8:1, 12; 13:1-4.
- B. We in the churches are the propagation of Christ and the expansion of Christ, and we are enlarging the kingdom of God—Rev. 1:9, 11.
- V. **In Acts 14:22 Paul entreated the believers who were continuing in the faith to realize that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God, because the whole world opposes our entering in; to enter into the kingdom of God is to enter into the full enjoyment of Christ as the kingdom.**
- VI. **In Acts 19 we see that Satan is fighting against God’s spreading of His kingdom on earth; the prevailing ministry for the propagation of Christ is a fighting, a battle, for God’s kingdom—vv. 9, 23-41.**
- VII. **Paul’s proclaiming the kingdom of God in 28:31 was the propagation of the resurrected, ascended, and all-inclusive Christ—vv. 23, 31:**
- A. This is proved by the words *teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ*, which things go together with the kingdom of God—v. 23.
 - B. To teach concerning Christ is to spread the kingdom of God; therefore, the kingdom of God is actually the propagation of the resurrected Christ—a process that continues to be carried out through the believers today—v. 31.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

CHRIST AS THE ONE IN RESURRECTION

Speaking to the Disciples the Things concerning the Kingdom of God

During these forty days, Christ as the One in resurrection...spoke to the disciples the things concerning the kingdom of God. Although we are not told in Acts what the Lord spoke concerning the kingdom, we may infer what He said by considering other portions of the Word. In the Gospels the Lord Jesus taught the disciples much concerning the kingdom. It is not likely that during the forty days after His resurrection, He gave the disciples something new concerning the kingdom. Rather, He may have repeated what He taught them in the Gospels. When the Lord spoke regarding the kingdom in the Gospels, the disciples were not able to understand what He was teaching them. They did not have the spiritual insight to understand the kingdom of God, because the Lord was not yet in them. But in John 20 they received the wonderful person of the resurrected Christ into them as the life-giving Spirit. As a result, in Acts 1 they were very different, for Christ, the life-giving Spirit, was now within them as their life and person. Because they had the life-giving Spirit within them, they were able to understand the Lord’s speaking concerning the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is not a material kingdom visible to human sight; it is a kingdom of the divine life. The kingdom of God is the spreading of Christ as life into His believers to form a realm in which God rules in His life. The kingdom of God is the ruling, the reigning, of God with all its blessing and enjoyment. It is the goal of the gospel of God and of Jesus Christ. To enter into this kingdom, people need to repent of their sins and believe in the

gospel (Mark 1:15) so that their sins may be forgiven and that they may be regenerated by God to have the divine life, which matches the divine nature of this kingdom (John 3:3, 5).

The kingdom of God is actually Christ Himself (Luke 17:21) as the seed of life sown into His believers, God's chosen people (Mark 4:3, 26), and developing into a realm in which God may rule as His kingdom in His divine life. Regeneration is its entrance (John 3:5), and the growth of the divine life within the believers is its development (2 Pet. 1:3-11). The kingdom of God is the church life today, in which the faithful believers live (Rom. 14:17), and it will develop into the coming kingdom as an inheritance reward (Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5) to the over-coming saints in the millennium. Eventually, it will consummate in the New Jerusalem as the eternal kingdom of God and the eternal realm of the eternal blessing of God's eternal life for all of God's redeemed to enjoy in the new heaven and new earth.

In Acts 1:3 the Lord Jesus as the One in resurrection must have helped the disciples to have such a proper realization concerning the kingdom of God. The disciples must have begun to see that the kingdom of God is the spreading of Christ as life to His believers, that it is the propagation of Christ as life to His believers to form a realm in which God rules in His life. The disciples certainly must have understood that they were now part of the propagation, the spreading, of Christ and thereby were part of the kingdom of God. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament*, pp. 2974-2975)

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

God's Reign in a Particular Way

In the Sense of Life

We have seen that God's kingdom is first His reign in a general way. In this way God rules His creation by authority and power. The kingdom of God is also God's reign in a particular way in the sense of life. God's reign in this way is by Himself as life. God's reign in this particular way does not involve that much exercise of authority and power.

In Adam's paradise the kingdom of God was there, ruling over Adam. However, with Adam in paradise we cannot see the kingdom of God in life. The same is true of the patriarchs and of the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. The kingdom of God was present with them but not in the sense of life. However, with the coming of the New Testament dispensation, the kingdom of God turns from God's reign in a general way to His reign in a particular way in the sense of life. Actually, this aspect of the kingdom of God is God Himself in Christ as life.

The Lord's word to Nicodemus in John 3 reveals God's reign in the sense of life. In verse 3 the Lord said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." To be born anew, to be regenerated, is to have a new birth that brings in a new life. Regeneration is simply to have a life other than the life we already have. We have received the human life from our parents; now we need to receive the divine life from God. Therefore, regeneration means to have the divine life, the life of God, in addition to the human life which we already possess. Regeneration, then, requires another birth in order to possess another life.

Every kingdom has a particular kind of life. The plants in the plant kingdom have the plant life, and the animals in the animal kingdom have the animal life. In the same principle, human beings in the human kingdom have a human life. From the Lord's word to Nicodemus we can see that, if we would know the things of the divine kingdom, we need another life, the divine life, God's life.

The kingdom of God as the reign of God is a divine realm to be entered into, a realm

which requires the divine life. Only the divine life can realize the divine things. This was the reason the Lord said to Nicodemus, “Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (v. 5). Hence, to see, or to enter into, the kingdom of God requires regeneration with the divine life.

With Christ as the Seed of Life

The fourth chapter of the Gospel of Mark reveals that the kingdom of God in the sense of life is with Christ as the seed of life. Verse 3 says, “Behold, the sower went out to sow.” The sower here signifies the Lord Jesus (Matt. 13:37), who was the Son of God coming to sow Himself as the seed of life (Mark 4:26) in His word (v. 14) into men’s hearts that He might grow and live in them and be expressed from within them. The kingdom of God is actually the God-man, Jesus Christ, sown as the seed of life into His believers. After this seed has been sown into them, it will grow in them and eventually develop into a kingdom.

During His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus sowed the seed of the kingdom into the human heart. In Mark 4 and Matthew 13 the human heart is likened to soil. Our heart is the field, the soil, into which the Lord Jesus has sown Himself as the seed of life. In the parable of the sower, the Lord Jesus is both the Sower and the seed sown. As the Sower, the Lord sows Himself as the seed of life through His word.

Jesus Christ is the seed of the kingdom of God, and this seed has been sown into those who believe in Him. Now this seed is growing and developing within the believers. Eventually, this growth and development will have an issue, and the issue will be the kingdom.

In the parable of the seed in Mark 4:26-29 we see the development of the kingdom seed. In verse 26 the Lord said, “So is the kingdom of God; as if a man cast seed on the earth.” The “man” here is the Lord Jesus as the Sower, and the “seed” is the seed of the divine life (1 John 3:9; 1 Pet. 1:23) sown into the believers of Christ, indicating that the kingdom of God is a matter of life, the life of God, which sprouts, grows, bears fruit, matures, and produces a harvest.

In Mark 4:27 the Lord continued, “And sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and lengthens—how, he does not know.” This illustrates the spontaneity of the growth of the seed.

In verses 28 and 29 the Lord went on to say, “The earth bears fruit by itself: first a blade, then an ear, then full grain in the ear. But when the fruit is ripe, immediately he sends forth the sickle, because the harvest has come.” The “earth” is the good earth (v. 8), signifying the good heart created by God for His divine life to grow in man. Such a good heart works together with the seed of the divine life sown into it to grow and bear fruit spontaneously for the expression of God.

Mark 4:26-29 reveals that the kingdom of God in the sense of life is a seed that is sown into the earth and grows until it reaches maturity, at which time it is harvested. The seed is Christ, and we are the soil into which He as the seed has been sown. The seed grows and eventually will produce the harvest, the full manifestation of the kingdom. Therefore, the kingdom is the Lord Jesus as the seed of life who has been sown into us and who grows in us until He reaches maturity at the time of harvest. When the crop is ripe, there will be the harvest, the full manifestation of the kingdom.

The growth of Christ as the seed of life within us is the process of the kingdom. On the one hand, we are in the kingdom; on the other hand, we are in the process of the kingdom. We may use the growth of wheat as an illustration. In a wheat field seeds are sown into the soil. The seed then grows until the tender young sprouts appear. The growth continues until the sprouts bring forth ears, fruit, and eventually are fully ripened. Then there is the harvest

of the field. This is a picture of the process and manifestation of the kingdom. Now we are in the process of the kingdom, for today we have Christ as the seed of life growing within us. Eventually, this growth will bring us to the harvest, and that harvest will be the full manifestation of the kingdom.

With Christ as Its Reality in Life

The kingdom of God as God's reign in a particular way in the sense of life is with Christ as its reality in life. This is revealed in Luke 17.

In Luke 17:21 the Lord said to the Pharisees, "Behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you." The word *you* here refers to the questioning Pharisees. The Lord Jesus as the reality of the kingdom in life was not within them but only in the midst of them.

In the Lord's answer to the Pharisees, there is the strong indication that the kingdom of God is actually Christ Himself. The Lord was actually telling the Pharisees that they could not see the kingdom of God, even though it was in the midst of them. Although the kingdom of God was present, they did not have the spiritual perception to see it. We need spiritual eyes to see the kingdom of God, which is actually the wonderful person of Christ Himself. The spiritual reality of Christ is actually the kingdom of God in the sense of life.

"When He was questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, Behold, here it is! or, There! For behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (vv. 20-21). The Lord's word that the kingdom of God "does not come with observation" indicates that the kingdom of God is not material but spiritual. Verses 22 through 24 prove that the kingdom of God is Christ Himself, who was in the midst of the Pharisees when He was asked by them regarding the kingdom. Wherever the Savior is, there is the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is with Him, and He brings it to His disciples (v. 22). He is the seed of the kingdom of God sown into God's people and developing in them into God's ruling realm. Since His resurrection, He is within His believers (John 14:20; Rom. 8:10). Hence, the kingdom of God with Christ as its reality in life is within the church today (14:17). (*The Conclusion of the New Testament*, pp. 2550-2554)

THE REALITY OF THE KINGDOM

Christ's Expansion as the Enlargement

The kingdom's reality is also seen in Christ's expansion as the enlargement. Christ's expansion is His growth within us, and His expansion is His enlargement.

Revelation 1:6 tells us that we have been made the kingdom of God. Christ released us from our sins by His blood (v. 5) and made us a kingdom. The believers redeemed by the blood of Christ have not only been born of God into His kingdom (John 3:5) but have also been made a kingdom for God's economy, which is the church (Matt. 16:18-19). John, the writer of the book of Revelation, was in the kingdom (1:9), and all redeemed and reborn believers are also part of this kingdom (Rom. 14:17).

We are God's kingdom because we are the expansion of Christ, His enlargement. Luke 17:20-21 confirms this. "When He was questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, Behold, here it is! or, There! For behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you." What does it mean to say that the kingdom of God does not come with observation? It means that the kingdom is invisible. The kingdom is something that cannot be observed by our natural ability. In particular, the kingdom cannot be observed by our natural thinking, which is completely useless in apprehending the kingdom of God. The

kingdom of God is not material but spiritual. As a spiritual reality, it can be realized only by the Spirit in our regenerated spirit.

The kingdom in its reality today is the Lord Jesus as the Spirit. In Matthew 12:28 the Lord said, "If I, by the Spirit of God, cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." This indicates that the kingdom is the reality of the Spirit of God, which is the reality of Christ. The Spirit is the reality of the Lord Jesus, for the Spirit is His person, and His person is His reality. The kingdom, therefore, is the spiritual realization of the Lord Jesus. When we realize Him spiritually, we have the kingdom in its reality.

In Luke 17:20-21 the Lord revealed that He Himself is the kingdom. As the One who is Himself the kingdom, He enters into His believers and grows in them to have an expansion, an enlargement, and this enlargement is the kingdom in its reality. Therefore, both the seed of the kingdom and the expansion of the kingdom are the reality of the kingdom.

The Enlargement Being the Realm of the Kingdom's Ruling

The kingdom of God is the Lord Jesus as the seed of life sown into His believers, God's chosen people, and developing into a realm over which God can rule as His kingdom in His divine life. Its entrance is regeneration (John 3:5), and its development is the believers' growth in the divine life (2 Pet. 1:3-11). It is the church today, in which the faithful believers live (Rom. 14:17), and it will develop into the coming kingdom as an inheritance reward (Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5) to the overcoming saints in the millennium (Rev. 20:4, 6). Eventually, it will consummate in the New Jerusalem as the eternal kingdom of God, an eternal realm of the eternal blessing of God's eternal life for all of God's redeemed to enjoy in the new heaven and new earth for eternity (21:1-4; 22:1-5).

In eternity the New Jerusalem will be the totality of all the believers shining forth the processed Triune God. The new earth will be a realm in which God will rule over the nations. This ruling realm will be formed by the shining of the New Jerusalem. Hence, the shining of the New Jerusalem will produce a realm for God's ruling. This is the kingdom of God. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament*, pp. 2639-2640)